

Britain's Early Religious History



**Various Authors and
Sources**

A Miscellany of Extracts Concerning The Ancient Religious History of The British Isles



SACRED ISLE: by tradition Britain is a sacred isle of immense antiquity, home of divinatory arts and a repository of souls; Greek writers were wont to write of ‘the secrets of the island of Britain’

To the peoples of antiquity the isle of Britain was the very home and environment of mystery, a sacred territory, to enter which was to encroach upon a region of enchantment, the dwelling of the gods, the shrine and habitation of a cult of peculiar sanctity and mystical power. Britain was, indeed, the *insula sacra* of the West, an island veiled and esoteric, the Egypt of the Occident.' (Lewis Spence, *The Mysteries of Britain*, 1905)

Britain was home to the first Christian realm [see below, Christianity] and long before that Druidism was invented on the island [see below, Druidism]; the extraordinary antiquity and spread of British influence is advertised in the following quotation:

Aristotle affirms that philosophy did not pass from Greece to Gaul, that is to the Druids, but was received from them. Not only do Greek writers pay these tributes to the reputation of the philosophy of ancient Britain, but others have established a connection between it and ancient India, where the British Isles were spoken of as:–

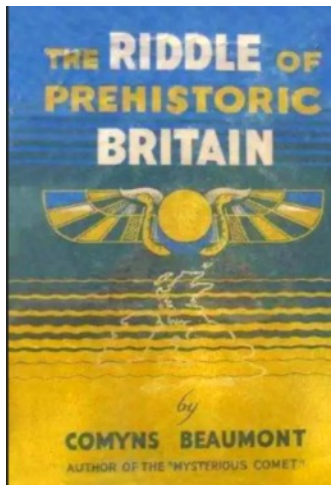
“the sacred islands of the west, calling one of them Bretashtan, or the seat and place of religious duty.”

These sacred islands the Hindus referred to as the abode of the Pitris or fathers of the human race, and the Cymry call themselves the oldest race. Sir William Jones, writing on “the lunar year of the Hindus” says “On the day of the conjunction, obsequies are performed (as offerings) to the manes [souls] of the Pitris, or progenitors of the human race, to whom the darker fortnight is peculiarly sacred.” (John Daniel, *Philosophy of Ancient Britain*, 1927)

Ancient repository of souls: the Roman historian Procopius (AD c 500-565), the last major historian of the ancient world, described how fisherman in Brittany found their boats sunk to the gunwales by the invisible spirits of the dead whom they felt impelled to carry across to Britain’s shores; on arrival they saw their boats rise in water as souls landed and they heard voices of other invisible beings on shore checking names and status; the Romans are said for this reason to have absolved the Bretons (in what is now northern France) from paying the imperial tax; the ancients, right back to the Egyptians, believed that souls were borne towards the setting sun to a land in the western sea; for the Celts of mainland Europe the destination after death was the Island of the Blest; the notion of Britain as an ancient repository of souls chimes with the modern interpretation that Stonehenge and Britain’s myriad other stone circles might be, among other things, memorials to the revered dead [see Stonehenge]

It is clear that in very primitive ages the cultured nations of the Mediterranean regarded our islands with peculiar reverence and fear. The entrance of Hades lay in these seas, and here apparently Charon ferried the departed souls across the River of Death. The curious basaltic columns of Ulster and the Western Isles, and the awe-inspiring portals of Fingal’s Cave [Staffa], probably had something to do with these extraordinary notions, but it is certain that they were sufficiently credited after the Christian era to daunt the well-tried soldiers of Agricola. (A H Whatmore, *Insulae Britannicae*, 1913)

—the offshore island had to be brought under Roman domination. The task was hard and repellent to the legionnaires who undertook it, for the Romans seem to have regarded this island adjoining Ultima Thule as the vestibule of Hades, a region of mists and half-light where the ghosts of the dead floated about crying with the weird voices of sea birds. (R J White, *The Horizon Concise History of England*, 1971)



—Britain continued as the real heart of the Underworld cult until she was overthrown by the Romans.' (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

The Hebridean islet of Staffa, with its extraordinary basalt rock columns and temple-like Fingal's Cave, was likely the Hellenic Hades and may have inspired Greek architectural columns and influenced the design of Greek temples; Fingal's Cave may even have been the judging hall of the Egyptian underworld; the foregoing conjectures arise from a consideration that the cultures of Greece and even

Egypt were younger than that of Britain and influenced by it

Fingal's Cave— a great natural temple to the marine gods, solitary but rarely silent— I introduce it to your notice as the key to Egypt's Underworld— Here stood the Hall of Judgement, and where Osiris presided... Here lay the Tuat at the "ends of the earth" in the West, a name still preserved in [nearby] Loch Tuath... it is the Gaelic term signifying the north, hence the Tuatha De Danaan, who inhabited these parts, the Northern De Danaan. The Tuat or Tat Pillars— represented on Egyptian wall-paintings bearing polygonal stripes... They were the Northern Pillars, marking the [basaltic] columnar regions, in whose midst, and crowning all others in stark significance, stands the phenomenal isle of Staffa.

The theologians who devised the resultant Underworld cult caused Horus after his great conflict with Set to bury him under the Tuat Pillars.

—Hades was regarded as an actual region and was placed by the ancients as in the British Isles, where, too, the Devil was traditionally deemed to have been thrown out of the heavens in his contest for supremacy with God.' (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

Not only do multiple cultures speak of a destination in the west after death but multiple cultures report the burying of gods under rocks; Plutarch (AD c46-120) described how Cronus-Saturn, the original sun god, lies buried under an island near Britain, held there by the power of Jupiter (the Roman version of the Greek's Zeus), where wise men could foretell the future by his sleeping moans and groans; Saturn became Satan of the Christians; south of Staffa is the island of Iona, which has an ancient pedigree of its own, including an alleged association with Apollo, who succeeded Cronus-Saturn as the chief deity of the civilized world.

Hyperborea: this was the first home of the gods of the ancients; Greek accounts (e.g. by the historian Diodorus in the first century BC) spoke of a land noted for its high civilisation 'beyond the north wind', an island bigger than Sicily; this was probably Britain and the Hyperborean's 'spherical temple' – mentioned by Herodotus – was likely Stonehenge, which was described by a first century BC Roman Commentator as a peace offering to Apollo [see Stonehenge]; the Hyperboreans and the Megalithic Britons shared a 19-year 'Metonic' astronomical calendar; yet there is some confusion as northeast Europe was also cited by classical Roman sources as home to the Hyperboreans; the Hyperboreans had extremely ancient contacts with the Greeks going back well beyond the classical period, sending the famous 'Hyperborean Gifts' to the island of Delos.

The Mediterranean centre of worship of Apollo, who is said to have walked in the Garden of the Hesperides (i.e. putatively the British Isles; see Fortunate Isles) and whose mother, Leto, was reputed to be a Hyperborean (i.e. putatively British); the exile of Princess Albyne to Britain brought to these shores a worshipper of Apollo, according to *The Bruts of England* [see Albyne].

Britain's Early Religious History

Diodorus, apart from apparently referring to Stonehenge, wrote that citizens played on the harp in a temple and city dedicated to Apollo; the Tysilio Chronicle speaks of a Temple of Apollo in London numbers of centuries BC [see Lucius], though Diodorus's city might have been nearer to Stonehenge and Avebury; meanwhile the Molmutine Laws in Britain, dating from around 420 BC, speak of three ornaments of a tribe that could not be distrained by law – a book (indicating early literacy), a harp and a sword; the Sack of Rome in 390 BC by a force led by Brennus of Britain [see Belinus & Brennus] was described by Heracleides Ponticus as an exploit of the Hyperboreans [Source: *Plutarch, Life of Camillus*, 22]; the brother of Brennus was Belinus, king of Britain.

'The Delian god [Apollo] remained in Britain until the Roman Conquest, as the great deity – apart from Hermes – and his native name Belinus or Belin was used by the Cassi monarchs.' (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

Referring to the foregoing quotation, an example of a Cassi monarch would be the 'Cassivelaunus' encountered in Britain by Julius Caesar, a name which is sometimes rendered with a 'b', as in Cassibelinus, for example, more clearly revealing the 'Belinus' root [see Lud, Cassivelaunus & Nennius]; Shakespeare's 'Cymbeline' shows the same root [see Cymbeline]; King Belinus, of ancient roads fame, is an earlier example [see Belinus & Brennus]; a former name of the island, Honey Isle of Bel, carries the same connotation [see Name]; a Bel cult survived well into the Roman era in Britain

'It was reported that in his [Roman Emperor Severus's] passage thither [to York in AD 211, when Severus is in old age], a Moor with a Cypress Garland on his head, did meet and salute him by the name of a God, and at his entrance into the City, he was by error of the Southsayer (that guided him) brought into the Temple of Bellona, and that black beasts being appointed for Sacrifice, did of themselves follow him [Severus] to his palace. These things howsoever they fell out accidentally, yet they were interpreted as ominous in respect of the event, and now Severus perceiving his death to approach called before him, some of his Councilors and chief Captains, unto whom he is said to have spoken– [saying] it

Britain's Early Religious History

is virtue only not glorious titles, which make men truly great-- When he had uttered these or the like speeches he turned a side and shortly after yielded up the Ghost. [Source: Enderbie, pp141 & 142]



If Britain was Hyperborea or derived in some way from the Hyperboreans, then Apollo, worshipped in the island, was a very ancient British deity, as well as being a Greek one and an Egyptian one too

Of great importance in ascertaining the past is the fact that the Greeks [e.g. Herodotus] and Egyptians recognized Horus as the same deity as Apollo, the great god of the Hyperboreans in the North and British Isles. (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

In regard to the following quotation, it should be noted that the Hebridean island of Iona is seven miles south of Staffa, putative Hades [see Ancient repository of souls]; Iona is the site of Megalithic stones, was famed formerly as the Druid's Isle and was where the renowned sixth century Christian missionary, St Columba, founded an abbey, the siting of which was itself a recognition of prior pagan spiritual potency

For the Hyperborean origin of both Apollo and Artemis is too firmly established to be shaken, and when we have evidence that the Hyperboreans dwelt in the very north it becomes impossible to accept the belief that the northern god and his twin sister could owe their origin to any Mediterranean site. The present Delos [Cyclades island group, Aegean], like so many other sites, owes its inception to a later period, due doubtless to immigration of Greeks from the north-- The Scottish Delos...was Iona, which derives its name, we may assume, from [the goddess] Io, the extraordinary sanctity of this historic spot of Britain-- the true birthplace of the Delian Apollo. (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

Britain's Early Religious History

The Hyperborean Artemis, whose Roman equivalent is Diana, can be identified with the goddess Britannia [see Britannia]; St Paul's Cathedral in London was originally a Temple to Diana [see Lucius]



Druidism: a religious system devised in Britain, according the Gauls encountered by Julius Caesar, who wrote that The cardinal doctrine which they seek to teach is that souls do not die, but after death pass from one to another-- they have many discussions as touching the stars and their movement, the size of the universe, the order of nature, the strength and the powers of the immortal gods-- (*Julius Caesar*; More 10)

Britain was recognized as the seat of Druidism by continental Europeans, such as the Gallic Druids whose centre was Orleans in modern-day France, the Gauls, who, according to Valerius Maximus, were sufficiently confident in this belief [reincarnation] to lend money to be repaid with interest in the next life. (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

The Druids held oak – and mistletoe which grows on it – particularly sacred (Greek *Dryidae*, ‘*oak-priests*’)

XVII.—They worship as their divinity, Mercury in particular, and have many images of him, and regard him as the inventor of all arts, they consider him, the guide of their journeys and marches, and believe him to have very great influence over the acquisition of gain and mercantile transactions. Next to him they worship Apollo, and Mars, and Jupiter, and Minerva; respecting these deities they have for the most part the same belief as other nations: that Apollo averts diseases, that Minerva imparts

the invention of manufactures, that Jupiter possesses the sovereignty of the heavenly powers; that Mars presides over wars.

XVIII.—All the Gauls assert that they are descended from the god Dis, and say that this tradition has been handed down by the Druids. (Julius Caesar, *More* 10)

Note that Holinshed [see Sources] identifies Dis with Samothēs, the first suggested king of Britain, as dubiously attested as he is [see Samothēs, 'Celts']; note also that 'Paradise' comes from para, near, Dis, God; Caesar's 'Mercury' is the name of a feeble Roman edition of the god known to the Greeks as Hermes, Thoth to the Egyptians and Taautus to the Phoenicians; the Greeks accorded Hermes the surname 'Atlantiades', preserving a memory of his western affiliation, as distinct from the Hyperborean Apollo's more northern provenance

There is no surprise that Hermes was the principal deity in Britain, for his genealogical tree, as contained in Greek myths show immediately his relationship to the Ocean [i.e. the Atlantic], the West, and to Atlantis' (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946; see Atlantis)

In this analysis, given Druidism's antiquity and its invention in Britain, Hermes is an indigenous British deity and not a later import from the Greeks for example; the antiquarian William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850), author of *Hermes Britannicus* (1828), reckoned that Avebury Stone Circle was a temple sacred to the sun god Cronus-Saturn, but had then become a centre of Druidism, whose god was Hermes; several ancient Ermine Roads in Britain are said to be named after Hermes, protector of the highways and winged messenger of the gods; the north-south Ermine Street was the great highway of its day.

The pagan god Hermes, identifiable with Roman Mercury and Germanic Odin, was messenger of the gods and escorter of the dead to the Underworld— As a constant traveller, always on the move, the winged Hermes was also a god of highways. The earliest form of his wayside shrine was simply a heap of stone – travellers adding a stone as they passed by – later

on these were replaced by stone pillars having a bust of the god on top— Roadside idols of Hermes, were the immediate forerunners of Christian wayside shrines—' (Ian McNeil Cooke, *Journey to the Stones*, 1996)

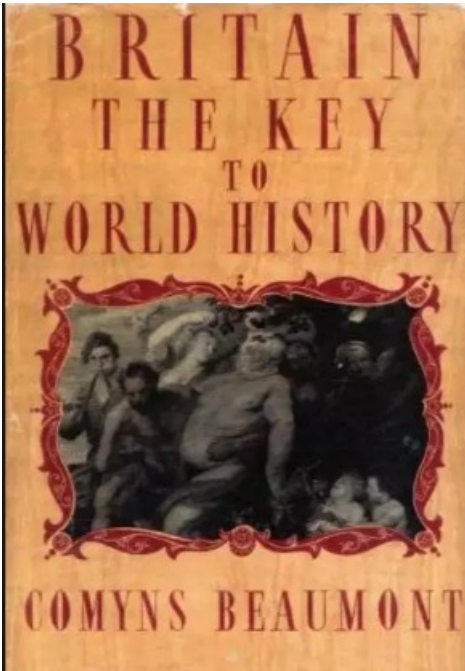
An example of stacked-stone megalithic statuary is Bowerman's Nose on Dartmoor; this is believed to be a representation of Hermes, complete with a stone to indicate the hat that he is traditionally depicted as wearing [see Statuary]; an early name of Britain, according to the White Book of Rhydderch, dating from the 1300's but utilising much earlier material, was 'Merlin's Precinct'; in one view 'Merlin' was a local name of Hermes and also the later name of office-holding Archdruids

Druidism, in the guise of Hermes Trismegistus, was really the world teacher of astronomy, greatest of scientists. We have observed the important contact between Britain and Egypt – as well as ancient Greece – of which the god Hermes or Thoth provides the link, a belief in reincarnation was the doctrine of Hermes... Hermes or Thoth was originally the "Secretary of Cronus", or the Messenger of the Gods.' (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

A divergent account of Druidism is that articulated in the nineteenth century by the Rev R W Morgan, who was the Welsh bard Môr Meirion [see More 14]; a Druidic trinity is described, one of whose members resembled Jesus Christ, even down to his name

It is singular thus that the Ancient Briton has never changed the name of his God he and his forefathers worshipped, nor has ever worshipped but one God. (R W Morgan; **More 14**)

Christianity: Cornish legend has it that Jesus came to Britain as an infant with Joseph of Arimathea, who was his mother's uncle according to the Talmud and, in the view of some, a tin trader; Jesus instructed his followers to take his message to the "ends of the earth"; Joseph did just that, undertaking the first Christian mission, to Britain, shortly after the crucifixion; Gildas, a British monk writing in the second half of the AD 500's, recorded that 'Joseph introduced Christianity into Britain in the last year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar', i.e. AD 37" [see More 3 & More 11];



because of this early date and Joseph being granted land by King Arviragus [see Arviragus] and because Joseph was eventually buried in Britain, the Council of Pisa in 1409 declared that the King of England had seniority over Spain, France and others and could alone describe himself as His Most Sacred Majesty

'His [Joseph of Arimathea's] tomb is said to have borne the simple epitaph, "Ad Britannos veni post Christum sepelleri: Docui: Quievi." (I came to Britain after I buried Christ: I taught: I rest)' (William Comyns Beaumont, Britain – the Key to World History, 1947)

A female kinswoman of Jesus and Joseph called Anna is said by some to have married into the royal line of Britain, becoming an ancestor of King Arthur [see Arthur]; the first royal convert to Christianity was Bran the Blessed, father of leader of the resistance to Roman imperialism in the mid years of the first century AD, Caractacus [see Caractacus]; Britain's King Lucius of the second century AD was the world's first Christian ruler and Britain became the world's first Christian realm [see **Lucius & More 1**].

Lucius had a famous correspondence with Pope Eleutherius and appointed bishops and archbishops [see below, Archbishops]; the Archbishops of Treves and Rheims in Gaul were for many years from Britain; St Cadwal was a famous British missionary to Italy, founding the church at Tarentum in AD 170; the British royal descriptor 'Court of St James' probably should really refer to 'St Joseph', the confusing nomenclature resulting from the Council of Basle in 1434; the Roman Catholic version of Christianity was brought to England by Augustine in AD 596 [see

below, St Augustine of Canterbury], more than half a millennium after the actual arrival of primitive Christianity; which had been favourably received because of a perceived congruence with Druidism [see *Druidism & More* 14]; receptivity was also built by a curious prophecy, delivered in the early first century AD:

There was in Great Britain in the time of this King Cambelinus [see *Cymbeline*], a soothsayer, whom they called Thezelinus, and who was said to be a prophet; so it happened, once upon a time, that the king was holding a great feast at his court, and he commanded that they should bring him this Thezelinus, of whom, when he came, the king required, in presence of his barons, that he would be pleased to prophecy something concerning the time to come; at which request, Thezelinus replied to the king, telling him not to be astonished to hear that the Saviour and Redeemer of the whole world was born of a virgin, without human corruption.

The king and the other barons caused this prophecy to be written down, and often afterwards they recollected it; and for this reason the Britons believed in our Lord as soon as they heard him spoken of or preached, because they remembered the prophecy of Thezelinus.’ [Source: *De Wavrin*, p128]

For it appeareth by the testimony of some ancient Writers, that Brittain received the Christian Faith even in the Infancy of the Church, immediately after the death of our Saviour, whose Apostles and Disciples (according to his Commandment) published and dispersed the same in divers Regions, partly by themselves in their own persons, & partly by their Ministers, among whom were sent into Brittany. Simon Chananeus that after his peregrination in Mauritania (as it is reported) was slain and buried in this Island, Aristobulus a Roman, of whom St. Paul in his Epistles maketh mention, and Joseph of Arimathea, a noble Man of Jury specially remembred of Posterity for his charitable Act of burying the Body of our Saviour.

This Man was appointed of St. Philip the Apostle then preaching the Christian Faith in Gallia [Gaul], to instruct the ancient Brittain, among

Britain's Early Religious History

whom he began first, as some write, to institute an Eremitical life in in a place called Duellonia, and afterwards Glastonbury, where himself and his Companions initiating the austerity and zeal of solitude, which they had observed in Mary Magdalen, (with whom they travelled out of Jury into Marsilia in France) sequestered themselves from all worldly Affairs, that they might freely attend to the exercise of piety which they professed: yea some Writers of former Ages have writ, that the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul [see next item], in their own persons at several times, came into Brittain. [Source: *Enderbie*, p131]

St Paul: King Arviragus of Britain is said also to have received a visit from Paul in AD 63, giving the visiting Christian apostle a grant of land in London; this had been the site of original Temple of Diana built by Brutus [see Brutus]; it became St Paul's Cathedral [See Press Release 1]; an Apocrypha 29th book of the Acts of Apostles describes Paul journeying to Britain; the proposition that St Paul visited Britain is perfectly plausible [see More 11]; St Peter is also reckoned to have preached in Britain, specifically at what is now Westminster Abbey, which is dedicated to him.

A contemporary of Morgan's was the Pontypridd Archdruid, Evan Davies (1808-88), also known as Myfyr Morganwg

He [Myfyr Morganwg] was profound also in his reading and understanding of esoteric literature from the East. Comparing the two branches of ancient wisdom, eastern and western, he concluded that the Druid system had first arisen in Britain, spreading thence throughout the entire world. Eastern religions, he believed, were degenerate forms of the original Welsh model, and their proper reformation was primitive Christianity.' (John Michell, *Eccentric People and Peculiar Notions*, 1984)

The last of the Pontypridd Druids, Morien (d1928), agreed:

Christianity, he wrote, 'is the venerable religion of the Druids, brought back to the Isles of the Gentiles from the East, under a Greek name.' (John Michell, *Eccentric People and Peculiar Notions*, 1984)

Britain's Early Religious History

Much earlier, the colourful Druid Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826) had upheld the same view [see *Iolo Morganwg*]; note that the Druids were highly literate; since Druidism arose first in Britain, this indicates that the British were literate long before the arrival of the Romans 'The Druids in their sacred writings used the Bardic alphabet, of forty-two characters; but in their civil transactions, as Caesar informs us, the Greek alphabet.' (R W Morgan, *St. Paul in Britain*, 1861)

When they [the Druids] did set pen to parchment they used the Greek tongue and letters, a strange fact when we consider that the British people were supposed to be mere barbarians, ignorant of the world beyond their shores until the Romans kindly undertook to enslave them.' (William Comyns Beaumont, *The Riddle of Prehistoric Britain*, 1946)

There is a touching beauty in many of the Druidic triads, as in the following:-"There are three men all should love: He that loves the face of mother Nature; he that loves rational works of art: he that looks lovingly on the faces of little children." (R W Morgan, *St. Paul in Britain*, 1861; More 14)



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Britain's Early Religious History

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Britain's Early Religious History

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St Paul preaching at the Temple of Diana in Ephesus, in modern day Turkey. He is reckoned also to have preached at the site of what had been the Temple of Diana in London

St Helen of the Cross: AD 248 - c 330; renowned British Empress and one of most important figures in Western history [see Helen]; Helen

was the daughter of a British monarch, Cole II, and married the Roman Emperor Constantius Chlorus; their son was mighty Constantine the Great, who legalised Christianity in the Roman Empire; in the same year as her son convened the Council of Nicea to establish Church doctrine, AD 325, she journeyed as a widowed Empress with imperial funding and a massive Roman military escort to the Holy Land to find Christian relics; she is said to have obtained the Holy Cross there, covering it with jewels and gold and placing it in a silver casket; the nails from the cross she had made into a bridle bit for her son's horse; the town of St Helen's in Lancashire is named after her and there are churches in Britain that preserve her name; a stained glass window in Landaff Cathedral, South Wales, depicts King Arthur carrying St Helen's Cross on his shoulder after victory at the Battle of Baedan against the Saxons; Helen and Constantine her son were key



figures in the rise of Christianity to become the religion of the West [see More 2]

Popes

Linus: son of captured King Caractacus [see Caractacus]; Caractacus had led the resistance to the Emperor Claudius after the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43; he said before the Roman Senate, “If you wish to lord it over the world, does it follow that the world is to accept slavery?”; he received clemency; Prince Linus became the first appointed Bishop of Rome in AD 58, i.e. the first Pope before the term was used; Linus was installed by St Paul in St Peter’s lifetime, the latter never holding formal office in Rome; the British royal Christians in Rome are mentioned by St Paul in his writings, in 2 Timothy 4:21 in the New Testament [see Claudia & More 11]; note though that the online Catholic Encyclopedia dates Linus's reign as Bishop of Rome to a later time, 67-76

Eleutherius: r175-89; contemporary of Britain’s King Lucius, the world’s first Christian ruler, with whom he shared a famous correspondence [see Lucius]

Simplicius: r468-83; contemporary of King Arthur, misnamed ‘Sulpicius’ by medieval historian Geoffrey of Monmouth [see Arthur, Geoffrey of Monmouth]

Pope Joan: a woman masquerading as a man, born early AD 800s; she reputedly reigned for two years as Bishop of Rome under the name of John VIII, Anglicus, i.e. ‘of England’, and there is a bust of her/him at Sienna Cathedral; Pope Joan is said to have died in childbirth during a papal procession

Stating a position: in 1080 the Bishop of Rome was reminded in a letter from William the Conqueror that the King of England owed him no allegiance

Adrian IV: this was Englishman Nicholas Breakspear, who died in 1159, apparently by choking to death on a fly in his wine - a pioneering demise among Bishops of Rome, not since emulated

Britain's Early Religious History

Coincidences: in 1981 Prince Charles married Diana, Liverpool were crowned club football champions of Europe, Australia lost the Ashes cricket contest with England and a pope died; in 2005 Prince Charles married Camilla, Liverpool were crowned club football champions of Europe, Australia lost the Ashes cricket contest with England and a pope died

Pelagius: AD c354-c430; a holy man of Britain who denied the Christian doctrine of original sin; he promoted the idea that salvation depends on human free will, as well as the grace of God, which was later declared a heresy
St Patrick: the patron saint of Ireland and a religious genius; he was born in the west of Britain and probably returned there to become Abbot of Glastonbury in AD 439

St Augustine of Canterbury: this personage is not to be confused with St Augustine of Hippo; St Augustine of Canterbury landed on Isle of Thanet in AD 597 on a papal mission; the west of Britain had already been Christian for hundreds of years [see More 1] but not the Saxon part, which was pagan; his remit was to bring the whole of Britain under the sway of Roman Catholicism; he failed with pre-existing church of Britons in the west, but converted local Anglo-Saxon king, Ethelbert, and conducted mass baptisms.

Augustine was the first Archbishop of Canterbury; he founded the Church of England, which was called as such by AD 1100s; there are 12,000 medieval-and-earlier churches still existing in Britain, 16,000 parish churches in all; the Pope's influence was finally thrown off after 900 years by Henry VIII Tudor, who was descended from ancient British stock

St David: d589; Wales's patron saint is the only one of the four in the British Isles to be native of the country of which he is patron saint; St David said, 'Do the little things in life'

Archbishops: there have been Christian archbishops in London since the time of King Lucius in the second century AD [see Lucius]; the first of

Britain's Early Religious History

these was Theon, starting c180, according to Holinshed & Enderbie [see Sources; for Enderbie's list, see More 1]; the unlucky 13th and last of the early era was Vodinus, who was killed by the Saxons in the 430's; prior to him was Guithelinus; he relayed the news to the Britons in 410 that the Romans were leaving, arranged for a king, Constantine, to be shipped over from Brittany (Less Britain') and later raised two of Constantine's children, one of whom, Uther Pendragon, was father to King Arthur - who held back heathen Saxon invaders for a generation [see Arthur]; the other archbishops in this section were of Canterbury in Kent, which was a pagan site before it became a Christian one and which is a mysteriously accurate 30° west of the Great Pyramid of Giza; the first Archbishop of Canterbury was St Augustine [see above].

St Dunstan (c 909-88) hailed from Glastonbury and was the dominant personality in Britain in the AD 900s; Dunstan devised the coronation service for the monarch which is still in use today and wrote the Coronation Oath, through which each sovereign enters a new covenant with the people to uphold law, justice and mercy [see Modern British Constitutions].

In AD 955 Dunstan dragged to his coronation teenage King Edwy, who was in bed with his mistress and her daughter; he exercised power through five reigns; St Alphege (954 -1012) was captured by the Vikings and murdered by them; St Anselm (c 1033-1012), an Italian, was the leading theologian of his day, being the founder of scholasticism and the inventor of the ontological argument for God's existence; at his insistence slavery was abolished in England in 1102; St Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by Henry II's knights in 1170; with his dying breath he invoked St Alphege's martyrdom in AD 1012; Becket's murder was witnessed by the archbishop's cross bearer, the aptly named Edward Grim.

Stephen Langton (1150-1228) divided the books of the Bible into chapters and also suggested to King John the deal with his barons that led to Magna Carta, the forerunner of all modern constitutions; in the present day, the Archbishop of Canterbury is world leader of the Anglican church, whose headquarters is Lambeth Palace, in Westminster, London;

Britain's Early Religious History

at Lambeth Palace in 1558 died peacefully Mary I (reigned 1553-8), daughter of Henry VIII; Mary tried forcibly to convert her country back to Catholicism from Protestantism, earning herself the soubriquet 'Bloody Mary'; Archbishop Ussher: 1581-1656; Anglo-Irish prelate who calculated from the lifespans of those in the Bible that the world had been created during the night preceding 23 October 4004 BC; the head of the church of England in the 21st century is Queen Elizabeth II

Christian missionaries: many have been British down the aeons, including Bishop Henry of Upsala, a Briton who founded the Finnish church in the AD 1100's Religious independence: after the Christian Reformation and the rise of Protestantism, Britain broke with Rome and Roman Catholicism in the period 1529-33, under Henry VIII; it was a freeing of the British mind for greatness [see More 5].

Religious toleration was to arrive later Bible in English: the Lollard movement was a precursor to the Protestant Reformation; the founder of the Lollards was John Wycliffe, AD mid-1320's-84; he was the first translator of the Bible into English; as a proto-Protestant he is known as 'The Morning Star of the Reformation'.

The 'Great Bible' commissioned by Henry VIII and published in 1539 was the Bible's first authorised English translation; it was translated by Myles Coverdale and partly based on the work of William Tyndale; 1609 saw the Roman Catholic Bible translated into English (complete); this was the Douai Version, English College at Douai, printed in London [Source: Robertson/Shell]. the King James Authorised Version of 1611 is one of history's most influential books; it incorporated the work of William Tyndale, who is thus one of the founders of English literature; in 1536 Tyndale was burnt at the stake outside Brussels as a heretic; another widely influential work was the Book of Common Prayer of 1549

Westminster Abbey & St Paul's Cathedral: the Abbey was built by Edward the Confessor (reigned 1042-66) and consecrated in 1065; it had previously been the site of a Temple of Apollo destroyed by an earthquake in Roman times; Edward died eight days after building work had ceased; a palace was built nearby, with the court moving from Winches-

Britain's Early Religious History

ter, which had been founded by Dunvallo Molmutius as the seat of government and used thus by Canute the Great, to London; this became the site of coronations and the burial place of monarchs; Poet's Corner is the last resting place of scribblers; many other notables are buried at nearby St Paul's Cathedral, including its architect, Christopher Wren (1632-1723), who was the first to find snug lying there – rather than in one of his other 51 London churches – and whose tomb inscription can be translated as 'Reader, if you seek a memorial, look around you' [see History in the news, Press release 1]

Sun-Fire worship: Pliny the Elder, AD23-79, remarked that the ancient Persians, the most famed of the later Eastern Sun-Fire worshippers, seemed to have derived their rites from Britain [see Sources: Waddell, p184]; 'The persons generally called "wise men from the East" were, we find, as corrected in the Revised Version of the New Testament, "Magi," (Matt. ii 1), a term solely used for the priests of the Sun and Fire-cult...' (Waddell, p279); Magus, founder of the Magi, was an ancient king of Britain, according to Holinshed [see Celts]; during the Roman era Mithraism came back the other way, to Britain, with a different solar-celestial viewpoint; the Tysilio Chronicle mentions the presence in London several centuries BC of a Temple of Apollo, who was a solar deity; this was on the site of what is now Westminster Abbey

Agnostic: from Greek meaning 'without knowledge'; the word was minted by the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, 1825-95, to describe someone who doubts whether it can be decided whether God exists or not; Huxley was a great champion of evolutionary theory and became known as 'Darwin's bulldog'; the great biologist Charles Darwin in fact had a brace of important 'hounds' in his life, the other being the Beagle [see Charles Darwin]

Chronology of additional religious firsts & milestones:

1143 - Qur'an (Koran): the first translation anywhere from the original Arabic was that of Robert of Ketton, into Latin

Britain's Early Religious History

1557 - Presbyterianism founded by John Knox (c 1510-72), a leader of the Protestant Reformation.

1784 - Bhagavad Gita: the first translation into English of the 'Song of God', one of the most important Hindu scriptures, was that of Charles Wilkins

1581 - Congregationalists: followers of Robert Browne (1540-1630) seceded from the Church of England, Norwich.

1640's - Quakers: also known as the Religious Society of Friends; 'Children of Light', an association of ex-Baptists founded at Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, by George Fox (1624-91) (see picture, right)

1729 - Methodists: founded by John Wesley (1703-91), who famously wrote "I felt my heart strangely warmed"; his brother Charles (1707-88) wrote thousands of hymns, including Hark, the Herald Angels Sing; Charles Wesley, William Morgan & Francis Gore were the founder members of Oxford University's 'Holy Club'

1770 - Shakers or United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing: founded by Mancunian 'Mother' Ann Lee, 1736-84; the approach in worship involves ecstatic dancing, hence this movement's name; the Shakers also became renowned for their work ethic

1765 - Black Anglican clergyman: this was Philip Quaque (born Cape Coast, West Africa, 1741), ordained by Dr Keppel, Bishop of Exeter, at St James's Palace Chapel [Source: Robertson/Shell]

1849 - Christian bells ring out once more in Jerusalem

As a result of the Crimean war that Britain, France and the Ottoman Sultan fought against Russia, a Turkish imperial edict in 1856 lifted a ban on Christian bell-ringing in Jerusalem, then part of the Turkish empire. The British were given the honour of erecting the city's first outdoor bell since the crusades, next to the Protestant church they had built in 1849. (The Economist, 5 January 2013)

Britain's Early Religious History

1859 - Parish magazine: John Erskine Clarke, St Michael's, Derby Parish Magazine [Source: Robertson/Shell]

1865 - Salvation Army: originated with revival meeting held by William Booth at Whitechapel Burial Ground, London; the Salvation Army was founded in 1865 by William & Catherine Booth, to promote the Christian message and give succour to the poor and needy; it now operates in 118 countries.



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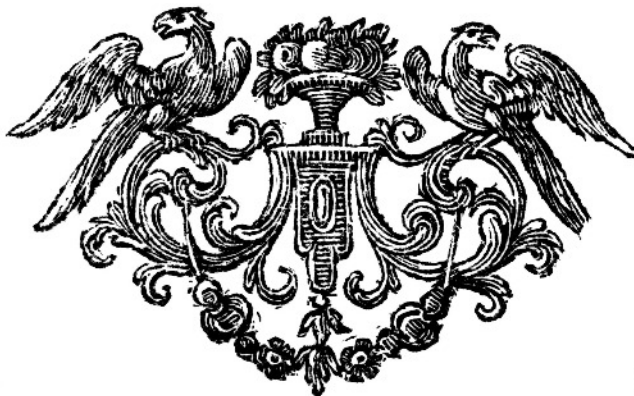
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